

## Duxbury



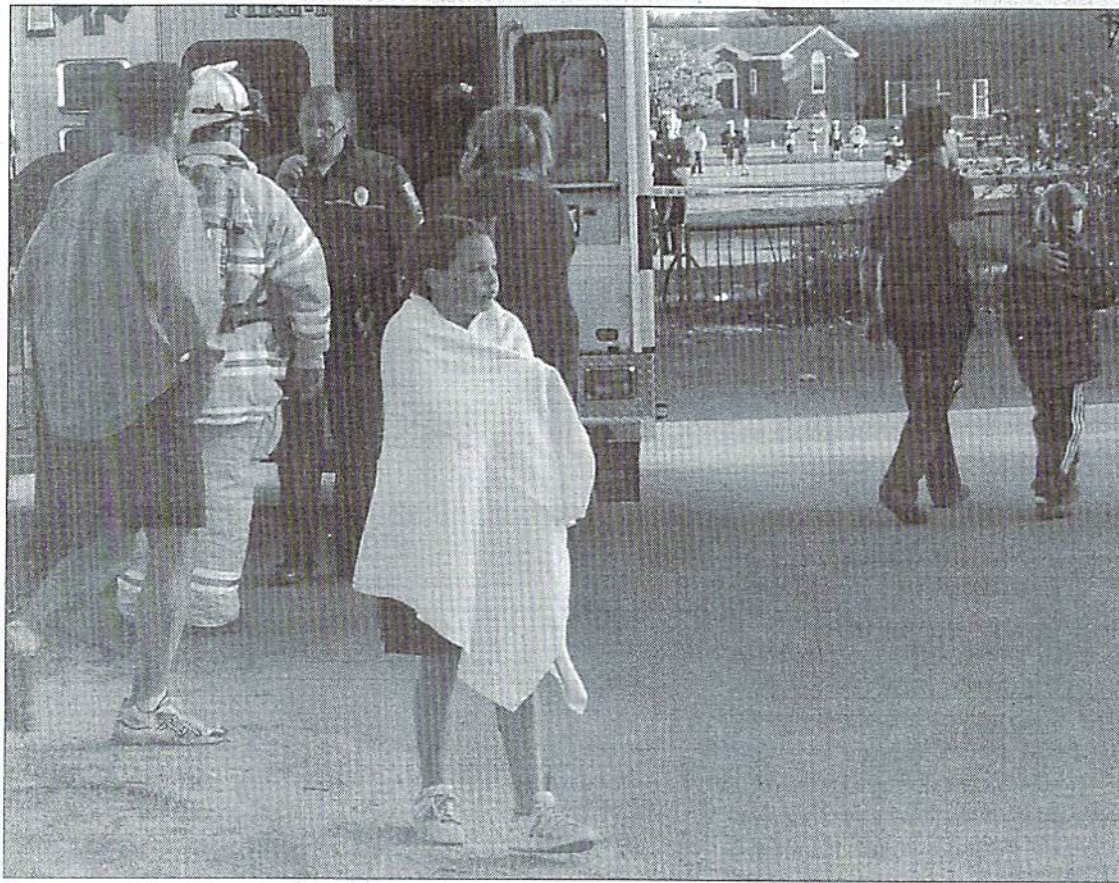
## Clipper

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Eight-year old Emily Mulcahy, wrapped in a towel, was one of 50 members of the Bernal's Gators swim team evacuated Monday evening following a chemical accident which caused toxic fumes. Shown, emergency crews helped transport eight young people for treatment of respiratory reactions following the accident at the Percy Walker pool.

## Toxic Chemical Mix Causes Pool Medical Emergency

By PAULA MAXWELL

Eight members of a South Shore swim team were transported to local hospitals and dozens more were evacuated from the town's Percy Walker pool area Monday evening when toxic fumes resulted from an improper chemical mix in the basement storage tanks.

Recreation Director Gordon Cushing described the emergency evacuation as "a nightmare" caused after a local pool treatment company representative accidentally filled sodium hypochlorite (chlorine) in a tank which already contained sodium bisulfate. The chemical reaction caused the release of chlorine and hydrochloric gases he said.

Eight members of Bernal's Gators swim team ranging in age from 7 to 14 were trans-

ported by emergency crews and treated and released from local hospitals. There were no serious injuries.

Coaches and recreation staff quickly cleared the pool on St. George Street after calling 911 at about 5:50 p.m. Several of the estimated 50 student swimmers in the pool at the time had trouble breathing and complained of burning eyes. Several were seen vomiting outside of the pool.

Fire Chief William Harriman immediately summoned the state's Hazardous Materials (HazMat) unit and a team from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to assess the air quality situation at the pool.

Police Lt. Roger Banfill and a team of police roped off the

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pool area and assisted in evacuating two homes across the street which were downwind of the the toxic vapors.



**Fire Chief Bill Harriman**

Cushing said that the incident occurred when a representative from Crystal Clear Pools in Kingston showed up at the pool around 5 p.m. wanting to make an unscheduled chlorine delivery. Recreation staff on duty told the delivery person they could not authorize any delivery after 5 p.m. when supervisory staff were not on duty. Cushing explained that regular pool chemical deliveries required a certified pool operator to be on the site at the time. Normally the two chemicals are dispensed together through a controlled pumping into the pool where they are mixed safely.

Cushing said he learned later that the operator may have had a leak in the truck tank and was attempting to deliver chlorine in order to empty it quickly. He said he learned that the pool representative had attempted to deliver to Camp Wing but was told there that the pool tanks had just recently been filled.

Cushing said that what apparently happened was that the operator went ahead and filled sodium hypochloride (chlorine) into a basement tank that already contained sodium bisul-

fate, a substance used to control PH levels in the pool water. The combination immediately caused a chemical reaction emitting strong toxic smoke-like vapors which can cause respiratory difficulties.

"As far as we're concerned, this delivery was unscheduled and unauthorized, and that is all I can say about the matter right now," said Cushing.

A spokesman for the pool company, Crystal Clear of Kingston, issued the following statement: "We regret the accident that happened and we are glad that nobody was seriously injured."

Fire Chief Bill Harriman said that someone will have to be responsible for the cost of summoning the state Hazardous Materials unit, who tested the levels of toxins in the pool area and eventually cleared the facility as a safe area about 9:15 p.m. The team came from Bourne equipped with specialized apparatus and measurement devices.

Harriman said that he went



**Over 50 students were evacuated from the pool area. Eight were treated at local hospitals.**

to Jordan Hospital Monday night and saw some of the kids being treated in the emergency room. Five were taken by Duxbury ambulance to Jordan Hospital and two were transported by Marshfield ambulance to South Shore Hospital. All received oxygen to clear their lungs and facilitate breathing. Inhalation of the gases can cause inflammation of the respiratory tract and other complications he said.

Firefighters used self-contained breathing apparatus at the scene but some of the police on duty outside the facility felt the effects of the gases complaining of dry throat and weeping eyes.

Parents of the children were called by coaches from the pool area and told to pick up their kids or meet them at the hospital. Police gathered their belongings for safe keeping.

Local swim coach Sue Littlefield said that kids from the team come from all over the South Shore and practice for meets at the Percy Walker Pool.

Pat Connolly whose son, Brian, was in the pool said that



he was doing fine after experiencing coughing and some stinging eyes.

Nine year old Emily Mulcahy of Scituate stood with her mother outside of the pool wrapped in a towel but did not require a trip to the hospital.

"All of a sudden everyone started screaming 'get out of the pool' 'get out of the pool'" she said. "Some kids were coughing and throwing up".

Cushing said Tuesday morning that he was up all night long



Police Officer Jim Tougas ropes off the town pool area following Monday's chemical accident.

assessing the situation. He had high praise for pool attendants Nick Merry and Tim Reimer whom he said acted responsibly in clearing the pool area and calling 911.

"We are very careful about monitoring this facility, and making sure that certified pool operators oversee deliveries. This never should have happened," he said. "Thankfully no one was seriously injured."

The pool remained closed Tuesday with plans in place to reopen later in the week.

Town Manager Rocco Longo said that the pool emergency is under investigation and that a full report would be forthcoming for insurance and other purposes.

"I can't say enough about the emergency response to what could have been a very bad situation. Luckily the pool attendants, Gordon (Cushing) and emergency teams reacted quickly and everyone is apparently ok.

"We will not be asking for tax dollars to cover the expense of medical or emergency response in this situation. The fact is, we did not order chlorine and it was delivered and put in the wrong tank which was clearly marked. Our the pool attendant was disregarded," he said. "We don't want deliveries we don't call for."

Several town employees who were on duty at the scene complained of dry throat, watery eyes and headaches. Longo said that any employee who experienced a reaction was advised to report any difficulty for the record.

Film footage of the pool incident was featured on Boston area news stations Monday night.